# Shelly Kagan

**Shelly Kagan is the Clark Professor of Philosophy at** [**Yale University**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yale_University) **and the former** [**Henry R. Luce**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Luce) **Professor of Social Thought and Ethics. A native of** [**Skokie**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skokie%2C_Illinois)**,** [**Illinois**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Illinois)**, he received his B.A. from** [**Wesleyan University**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wesleyan_University) **in 1976**[**[1]**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shelly_Kagan#cite_note-1) **and his Ph.D. from** [**Princeton University**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Princeton_University) **under the supervision of** [**Thomas Nagel**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Nagel) **in 1982. He taught at the** [**University of Pittsburgh**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Pittsburgh) **and at the** [**University of Illinois at Chicago**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Illinois_at_Chicago) **before arriving at Yale.**

## According to his Yale web page, his main research interests "lie in [moral philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moral_philosophy), in particular [normative ethics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Normative_ethics). Indeed, his second book is a systematic survey of the field of normative ethics, considered analytically (rather than historically, as is more typical of textbooks in ethics). More particularly still, much of his work centers on the debate between [consequentialist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consequentialism) and [deontological](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deontology) moral theories.

**An article in the *Yale Bulletin and Calendar* says that his book *The Limits of Morality* "critiques so-called *ordinary morality*; the view that there are limits to what morality can impose on humans; and defends the doctrine of classical** [**utilitarianism**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utilitarianism)**, which holds that people are morally obliged, without limit, to do as much good as they can." His *Normative Ethics* "examines how to judge the rightness or wrongness of actions, exploring such factors as consequences, harm and** [**consent**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consent)**."**

**Kagan's Yale course "Death" was recorded for** [**Open Yale Courses**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_Yale_Courses) **in Spring 2007** [**[4]**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shelly_Kagan#cite_note-4) **and the book *Death* is based on these lectures.**[**[3]**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shelly_Kagan#cite_note-yale-page-3) **In 2010, the online video lectures have made Kagan one of the most popular foreign teachers in China. Kagan also explores the concept of** [**desert**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Desert_%28philosophy%29)**, which is a philosophical concept of what individuals do or do not deserve, in his book *The Geometry of Desert.***

 **Kagan is a member of the editorial board of the journal** [***Ethics***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethics_%28journal%29)**.**

 **Kagan is considered one of the most prominent ethicists of his time.**

##  Bibliography

* ***Normative Ethics*, Westview Press, 1997.** [**ISBN 0-8133-0846-1**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special%3ABookSources/0813308461)**.**
* ***The Limits of Morality*,** [**Oxford University Press**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford_University_Press)**, 1989.** [**ISBN 0-19-823916-5**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special%3ABookSources/0198239165)**.**
* ***Death*,** [**Yale University Press**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yale_University_Press)**, 2012.** [**ISBN 978-0-300-18084-8**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special%3ABookSources/9780300180848)**.**
* ***The Geometry of Desert*,** [**Oxford University Press**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford_University_Press)**, August 2012.**[**ISBN 0199895597**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special%3ABookSources/0199895597).

****